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The University of Southern Mississippi

Perception, Literacy and Confidence in Monitoring of Snapchat among Parents of  
Adolescents and the Creation of a Snapchat Educational Workshop

by

Aerial Holmes

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Honors College of  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Arts  
in the Department of Psychology

May 2018



Approved by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Claire Kimberly". The signature is written in a dark ink on a light background.

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## **Abstract**

Various research studies have indicated that parental monitoring of social media is important and beneficial to children. However, some parents report that it is difficult to understand and that they lack an overall confidence in their ability to monitor. The purpose of this project was to analyze the relationship between parental confidence in their ability to monitor social media with social media literacy and attitudes/perceptions toward Snapchat. Forty-two participants were recruited through communication with local parent-teacher organizations, posted ads on The University of Southern Mississippi campus, and social media. The participants were given a survey that measured and assessed their social media literacy, attitudes and perceptions toward social media and confidence in monitoring skills. Correlations did not reveal a significant relationship between attitudes/perceptions toward social media, confidence in monitoring, and social media literacy. However, positive relationships were found between confidence in monitoring and both variables. These results—and information from previous research—were used to form a 45-minute online parent educational workshop/program to increase parental confidence in monitoring their child’s social media usage. This project concludes with implications of the study and suggestions for further research.

**Keywords:** Snapchat, media literacy, attitudes/perceptions, educational workshop, confidence in monitoring, social media

## **Dedication**

To my Mom, Jessie Redmond:

Thanks for supporting me in every way throughout this process. There is absolutely no way I would have succeeded in my undergraduate career as an honors college student without your love and support. Words cannot describe how much I appreciate you.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

|     |                                    |
|-----|------------------------------------|
| APA | American Psychological Association |
| BMI | Body Mass Index                    |
| FLE | Family Life Education              |
| SNS | Social Networking Site             |

## **Introduction**

Snapchat is a relatively new social media platform, but the number of users is comparatively high with 41% of teenagers utilizing it (i.e., 13-17 years of age; Brenner, 2015; Macmillan & Rusli, 2014). Snapchat also operates differently from other social networking sites (SNS). There is a higher level of customization and post-monitoring once content has been shared on Snapchat than other social networking sites (SNS), such as Facebook. The rapid growth of this social media platform combined with these additional mechanisms may come with an increased risk of these tools being used for potentially dangerous purposes by teens. For example, risks teens can face through social media include sexting (i.e., sending of sexually explicit material), exposure to sexting, cyber bullying and privacy risks (e.g., sharing locations and personal information; De Moor et al., 2008). Because of these risks and the number of teens using Snapchat, it is important that parents are aware of this social media platform and can successfully monitor their child's use of it.

The purpose of this project was to analyze the relationship between social media literacy of Snapchat, attitudes/perceptions towards SNS and confidence in parental social media monitoring behaviors and to form an educational tool for parents to use to increase their confidence in monitoring social media usage. There were three research questions that guided this project. First, does a parent's perception of SNS correlate to their confidence in their social media monitoring skills? Second, does social media literacy correlate with their confidence in their social media monitoring skills? Finally, can the information gathered be successfully transferred to a family life education program

focused on enhancing parents' social media monitoring skills? The expected outcome was that parents with a lower level of social media literacy would also report being less engaged and less confident in monitoring behaviors than parents with higher levels of social media literacy. It was also expected that parents who had negative attitudes toward social media would also report being less engaged and less confident in monitoring behaviors. Results from this study could lead to more research acquired regarding Snapchat and it can also add a unique take on parents' social media monitoring. This project would also lead to information on the effects of teaching media literacy to parents and not just awareness of social media risks.

## **Literature Review**

### **Risks and Benefits of Social Media Use**

As stated earlier, some risks teens face online include privacy hazards, cyberbullying, sexting, and exposure to sexually explicit material (De Moor et al., 2008). Privacy risks include sending out personal information such as location and general individual information (e.g., age, birthday, home address and phone number; De Moor et al., 2008). According to a study done by McAfee (2012), teens do not think online friends that they have not met in person are dangerous and over 10% report meeting someone that contacted them online.

Cyberbullying is usually defined as an aggressive and intentional act that is carried out through electronic forms of contact on someone who cannot properly defend themselves (Smith et al., 2008). Cyberbullying is continuing to increase with about 62% of teens saying that they have witnessed cruel behavior via social media and about 23%

reporting that they have been the targets of this behavior (McAfee, 2012). Close to 10% admit to bullying online and about 25% say that they have posted mean comments, while 50% of teens have had a negative experience via social media (McAfee, 2012). However, only a few parents actually think their children participate in or are victims of cyberbullying (Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008; McAfee, 2012). This shows that although parents are aware of this risk that teens face (Madden et al., 2013), they may think that their children, specifically, will not engage in it.

According to the Pew Research Center (2009), 4% of teens that have a cell phone reported sending sexually explicit material and 15% reported that they have received this kind of material. Thirty-two percent of teens admit to accessing pornography online intentionally and 43% admit to doing so on a weekly basis or more (McAfee, 2012). However, most parents do not think that their kids are accessing sexually explicit material online (McAfee, 2012). Again, parents are aware of risks teen face online but seem to be thinking their teens will not engage in those behaviors.

Although teens do face risks via social media, it is important to note that there are also some considerable benefits that could come from using social media, especially concerning their sense of identity (O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). O'Keefe and Clarke-Pearson discussed some of these benefits in their clinical report on the impact of social media. According to them, the benefits that teens gain from social media usage includes the fostering of their individual identity and enhancement of their creativity. Each time a child uploads content to their social media account, they are sharing/expressing information about themselves and receiving feedback from others.

They may also be identifying and aligning themselves with people or groups that share similar interests via social media. Another important benefit of social media is increased exposure to diversity. The online community is worldwide so it is likely that a teenager will be friends with or see content from people of various cultures and backgrounds. This exposure could give them practice of tolerance and respect for cultures and people that are different from them. Another benefit of social media use is that they are able to stay connected with their family and friends that do not live in close proximity. Through social media, teens are able to keep up with their loved ones' lives even though they do not see them often. Other considerable benefits of social media use include exposure to opportunities to serve their communities and the ability to connect and collaborate with their classmates for projects and assignments.

### **Importance of Parental Monitoring**

Parental monitoring of their teenage children is a key indicator of healthy parenting and positive youth development; however, monitoring is a complex parenting practice affected by the parents' reasons for monitoring, disciplinary tactics, and actual monitoring behaviors (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Gentile et al., 2014). Monitoring of social media adds additional complexity to the parental role. Parental mediation research explores the levels of monitoring behavior that parents engage in with their children (Warren, 2001). Two levels/types of mediation have been established in this research: restrictive and instructive mediation/monitoring (Shin & Kang, 2016). Restrictive monitoring includes limiting/restricting a child's access and exposure to certain types of media and setting regulations for media use. Instructive mediation can—and often does—

include some restrictive behavior, but it is more active and focuses on having discussions with the child about the use of media (Clark, 2011; Shin & Kang, 2016). Although restrictive mediation does have its advantages, various research studies have shown that instructive mediation is the more effective option because it engages the child in discussions with the parent about media use and supports autonomy (Fujioka & Austin, 2003; Shin & Kang, 2016). These two types of monitoring are sometimes referred to as active (instructive) and passive (restrictive; TeenSafe, 2015).

**Social Media Monitoring.** Although Snapchat is relatively new, social media sites have been popular among teens for quite some time. Parents have since then realized the dangers that come with social media such as sexting and cyberbullying with 81% of parents expressing *much* or *some* concern with the amount of information that can be acquired about their child through social media (Madden et al., 2013). Because of these things, it is important that parents make an effort to understand how social media is affecting their child's life and that they know the most effective ways to monitor the use of social media (Yardi & Bruckman, 2011).

A study done by Yardi and Bruckman (2011) took a closer look at parental monitoring by interviewing parents of teens who have social media accounts. Although their sample size was small and there was a lack of diversity in their sample (i.e., mostly white, suburban mothers), their interviews with the parents yielded very interesting and important findings. Parents did monitor social media use to some degree and reported that they would mostly feel responsible if something happened to their child via social media (e.g., sexting exposure or cyberbullying). They also found that some of the ways these



parents monitor include: taking cellphones after a certain time of night, using time limits and using social media time and use of cell phones as a way to punish or reward the child. These monitoring behaviors would be categorized as passive or restrictive because the parents are not directly engaging with their children's accounts, but only setting rules regarding the accounts (Shin & Kang, 2016). Another finding from this study was that parents were particularly challenged and lacked confidence in monitoring behaviors due to their unfamiliarity with technology. Typically, a parent is more informed on topics than the child. However, in this particular situation, the role was reversed with children knowing more about technology than their parents (Yardi & Bruckman, 2011). It could become more difficult to control a situation that a parent is not as familiar with especially when the child is fully aware that they know more about that topic and continue to learn ways to avoid parental monitoring (Shin & Kang, 2016). For example, 70% of teens reported finding ways around their parent's monitoring in 2012 compared to the 45% in 2010 (McAfee, 2010).

Another study conducted by Gentile, Reimer, Nathanson, Walsh, and Eisenmann (2014) focused on the effects of parental monitoring on the child. They used students and parents recruited for an obesity prevention program for their sample. Participants were given surveys that assessed total screen time, media violence exposure, school performance, and physical and social wellness. Parents were asked additional questions that assessed how closely they monitored their child's social media accounts. Gentile and colleagues (2014) found that parental monitoring does seem to have positive effects on the child's well-being; specifically, parental monitoring primarily reduced screen time

and exposure to media violence which related to children getting more sleep, better grades, and having a lower BMI. These results supported how social media can have a big impact on a child's life. It also emphasized the importance of parental interaction and monitoring of social media.

Gentile and colleagues (2014) examined the effects of monitoring social media on the child's life outside of their social media account. However, another study done by Williams and Merten (2011) focused more on the effects of parental monitoring on decreasing risks the child faces while he/she is online. Williams and Merten (2011) analyzed data from multiple sources to assess the influence of social media on family bonding and to see if parental monitoring has an effect on the amount of risks children face online. They found that social media can actually increase family bonding, but that this relationship is dependent on certain details. For example, reports of family bonding decreased as the number of devices available in the home increased. They also found that parental monitoring decreased contacts with strangers through social media, but not with online bullying. Williams and Merten (2011) suggest that this may be due to an "after the fact" approach to parental monitoring of social media instead of a communicative, hands-on approach (p. 166). Parents may feel like they just need to control how much time their child spends on social media (restrictive monitoring), but it may help to have actual conversations with children about their social media use (instructive monitoring; Valkenburg et al., 2013). Taking these steps could possibly prevent cyber-bullying before it gets to an extremely harmful level instead of trying to stop it when it has already caused significant damage to the children involved.

## **Snapchat and Attitudes/Perceptions toward SNS**

Not only is Snapchat new in terms of how long it has been circulating (since September 2011), but it is also new in terms of the way it operates. Snapchat--unlike its social media predecessors--has a heightened sense of privacy and customization, which differs from other platforms such as Facebook. Just like many other SNS, Snapchat has a news feed component called a *story* and also has an individual messaging component. However, each component contains features that other SNS do not. Snapchat allows the user to choose how long the receiver will be able to see their individual message; the messages they send can last up to 10 seconds before it disappears from the receiver's view. When sending individual messages, they can see when the receiver opened the message they sent. They are also notified if that person takes a screenshot or replays their message.

Snapchat users can also post a story, which consists of videos/photos that they post on their account's feed that can be seen by them and all of their friends/followers. The content they post on their story, only lasts for 24 hours and then it also disappears. The only way the user themselves can keep the story is if they press the save option within the 24 hours it is posted. Snapchat also allows the user to see a list of who has watched their story in chronological order and they are notified if someone takes a screenshot of it.

Attitudes/perceptions of SNS refers to how parents feel about and view the use of social media, including Snapchat. In a study done by Vaterlaus (2016), it was found that some parents of young adults found Snapchat to be "pointless and a waste of time" (p.

598). Parents also reported feeling helpless and overwhelmed when it came to social media; partly because their children are more tech-savvy than they are which may lead to a lack of confidence in monitoring. They also feel that they do not have the time to keep up with everything teens may be involved with online (McAfee, 2012). This alluded to attitudes/perceptions about SNS and their ability to monitor possibly having an effect on their actual monitoring behaviors.

As mentioned above, parental social media monitoring is important to a child's well-being, but—as the previous studies have shown—parental monitoring is new and may be difficult for parents to do (Yardi & Bruckman, 2011). If parents could have access to programs and workshops that provide information that help them learn about the different types of social media and how to monitor and not just control it; the negative effects of social media on children could potentially be decreased.

### **Parent Educational Workshops**

The studies in the preceding sections have established the importance of parents monitoring adolescents' social media use, but some of these studies have also highlighted the fact that parents may feel uncertain and lack confidence in their ability to do this. It seems that parents may need to be educated on social media themselves before they can effectively monitor their child's use. However, there are not many opportunities for parents to learn about these resources on how to use and monitor social media. Although there has not been much research done in this area, the following study yields interesting findings that the research and the workshop created in this study will push forward on.

A study conducted by Vanderhoven, Schellens, and Valcke (2016) compared the impact of involving parents in a social media intervention program versus not involving parents. They analyzed this by using pre- and post-tests at a program that children only attended and using those same tests at a program where parents were involved through a homework task. This created a situation where Vanderhoven and colleagues could analyze the impact of a parent education model on the success of parental monitoring. Vanderhoven et al. (2016) found that the program involving parents was more influential in actually decreasing a child's likelihood to engage in unsafe behavior via social media. The intervention that did not involve the parents only increased awareness of the dangers of social media but did not influence the child's behavior. This research shows that having educational programs that involve teaching parents as well can be more beneficial than not involving parents at all. Although this study did involve parents and put emphasis on the importance of that involvement, the intervention only discussed the dangers of social media and how to prevent or stop dangerous situations. However, it did not address the overall lack of understanding and knowledge parents have when it comes to social media. As the previous research has suggested, it may be difficult for a parent to truly understand the dangers surrounding social media and gain confidence in monitoring if they lack a general understanding of the social media platform itself.

According to the National Association for Media Literacy Education, media literacy is defined as “the ability to encode and decode the symbols transmitted via media and the ability to synthesize, analyze and produce mediated messages” (NAMLE, “Media Literacy Defined”, para. 2, n.d). It is the outcome of media education, essentially the

knowledge acquired after being educated about a certain media source (Buckingham, 2003). Social media creates a new category of media and because of that, some people have defined it separately from media literacy in general. With the original definition of media literacy as the basis, Vanwynsberghe, Boudry and Verdegem (2011) specifically defined social media literacy as a person's access and knowledge of social media and their ability to analyze, evaluate, share and create social media content.

Many parents increased their social media literacy of SNS through experience with their children or exploration of the platform. Many older adults are now actually users of Facebook (Brenner, 2015; Madden et al., 2013). However, Snapchat is relatively new and is completely different from any social media platform before it. Not only that, but it continues to attract more teens as time goes by (Brenner, 2015). This is why this study focused specifically on media literacy of Snapchat. Because of the knowledge from previous studies, the workshop created in this study focuses on not just awareness of risk factors but knowledge of benefits as well. It will also focus more so on enhancing parents' social media literacy of Snapchat to influence more instructive parental monitoring/mediation. These various research studies influenced the inquiry about the relationships between social media literacy, attitudes/perceptions toward SNS and confidence in monitoring. The data collected in this study was used to analyze these relationships and inform the creation of the workshop.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

Forty-two participants were recruited through communication with local parent-teacher organizations, posted ads on The University of Southern Mississippi campus, and social media. After informed consent was agreed upon, the participants took an online survey that measured and assessed their social media literacy of Snapchat, attitudes and perceptions towards SNS, and confidence in their social media monitoring skills. Forty of the participants were female and two were male (median age: 39.78 years,  $SD = 9.34$  years). Thirty-six of the participants were Caucasian and five were African American. A minority of the participants (19.5%) reported that they were single, 68.3% reported that they were married, 9.8% reported being divorced, and 2.4% reporting being widowed. Some of the participants stated that they had received some college education (9.8%), 7.3% had two-year degrees, 39% had four-year degrees, 29.3% had professional degrees and 14.6% obtained a doctoral degree. A relatively few participants (2.4%) reported an income of less than \$10,000; 19.5% reported an income between \$10,000 and \$49,999; 41.5% reported an income between \$50,000 and \$99,999; and 36.6% reported an income of \$100,000 or more. A few participants (11.9%) reported having no children (under the age of 18) living at home, 28.6% reported having one child living at home, 31% reported having two children living at home, 14.3% reported having three children living at home, 9.5% reported having four children living at home and 4.8% reported having five children living at home.

## Measures

**Social Media Literacy of Snapchat.** As stated earlier, social media literacy is the ability to comprehend and use content via social media. In order to measure participants' ability, questions were asked on the survey about their familiarity with Snapchat and social media navigation. To assess this, parents were asked if they knew about Snapchat. If so, they were asked to provide an explanation of the SNS in their own words. Participants were also asked to report their knowledge of the following: the location of messages on Snapchat, emoticons/emojis, adding friends on Snapchat, views on Snapchat and the location of the news feed button on Snapchat (see Appendix D for full measurement). Participants were provided with either the response option of *yes* or *no*.

**Attitude/Perception towards Snapchat and Other SNS.** A portion of the measurement entitled Media and Technology Usage and Attitudes Scale (MTUAS) was used to assess attitudes/perceptions toward SNS. These statements included 16 items that utilized a five-point Likert scale (*strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*) to measure attitudes toward technology (Rosen, Whaling, Carrier, Cheever & Rokkum, 2013). This scale was used as the main measure for attitudes in this study with wording changed to assess attitudes toward Snapchat and other SNS instead of technology in general. Participants were asked to rank these statements about attitudes/perceptions toward SNS. Some statements aligned with a positive attitude towards social media and some aligned with a negative attitude (see Appendix D).

**Confidence in Parental Monitoring of Snapchat and Other SNS.** In order to measure confidence in knowledge about social media and their ability to monitor their



child's social media use, participants were asked to rank their level of confidence in the following areas: resource availability to aid in risk awareness of social media, ability to monitor their child's social media account, resource availability to aid in teaching safe social media practices and ability in monitoring Snapchat with current level of knowledge regarding Snapchat. Their response options ranged from "*not at all confident*" to "*very confident*" (see Appendix D).

## **Results**

### **Attitudes/Perceptions toward SNS**

When presented with the statement, "I feel it is important to keep up with the latest social media networking sites," 2.4% of the participants strongly disagreed, 26.8% disagreed, 29.3% were indifferent (neither agreed nor disagreed), 24.4% agreed and 17.1% strongly agreed. When responding to another attitude statement, "With social media, anything is possible," 14.6% of the participants strongly disagreed, 43.9% disagreed, 17.1% were indifferent, 17.1% agreed and 7.3% strongly agreed. The responses for the negative attitude statement, "Social media makes people waste time," included 2.4% of the participants who disagreed, 2.4% who were indifferent, 51.2% who agreed and 43.9% who strongly agreed. Responses for the negative attitude statement, "Social media makes life more complicated," included 4.9% of participants who disagreed, 29.3% who were indifferent, 46.3% who agreed and 19.5% who strongly agreed. Other frequencies from the attitudes/perceptions portion of the questionnaire can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. *Percentage (Number) of Responses to Importance of Online Usage*

|   | Strongly disagree | Disagree   | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree      | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|------------|----------------------------|------------|----------------|
| I feel it is important to be able to find any information online whenever I want. (Positive attitude) | 0% (0)            | 4.9% (2)   | 9.8% (4)                   | 43.9% (18) | 41.5% (17)     |
| I feel it is important to be able to access social media anytime I want. (Positive attitude)          | 2.4% (1)          | 17.1% (7)  | 31.7% (13)                 | 24.4 (10)  | 24.4 (10)      |
| I feel it is important to keep up with the latest social networking sites. (Positive attitude)        | 2.4% (1)          | 26.8% (11) | 29.3% (12)                 | 24.4 (10)  | 17.1% (10)     |
| Social media will provide solutions to many of our problems. (Positive attitude)                      | 19.5% (8)         | 63.4% (26) | 12.2% (5)                  | 4.9% (2)   | 0% (0)         |
| With social media, anything is possible. (Positive attitude)  | 14.6 (6)          | 43.9% (18) | 17.1% (7)                  | 17.1% (7)  | 7.3% (3)       |
| I feel that I get more accomplished because of social media. (Positive attitude)                      | 29.3% (12)        | 43.9% (18) | 22.0% (9)                  | 2.4% (1)   | 2.4% (1)       |
| Social media makes people waste too much time. (Negative attitude)                                    | 0% (0)            | 2.4% (1)   | 2.4% (1)                   | 51.2% (21) | 43.9 (18)      |
| Social media makes life more complicated. (Negative attitude)   | 0% (0)            | 4.9% (2)   | 29.3% (12)                 | 46.3% (19) | 19.5 (8)       |
| Social media makes people more isolated. (Negative attitude)  | 0% (0)            | 2.4% (1)   | 19.5% (8)                  | 58.5% (24) | 19.5% (8)      |

## Media Literacy of Snapchat

The first question the participants responded to in this section of the survey was “Do you know what Snapchat is?” A majority of the participants reported that they did know (97.6%) and 2.4% said that they did not. Another question asked, “Do you know what a Snapchat score is?” and 36.8% of the participants reported that they knew about a Snapchat score and 63.2% reported that they did not know. Participants were also asked if they understood what the statement, “I have 127 views on Snapchat” meant; 76.5% percent of the participants reported that they did know what that meant and 23.5% reported that they did not. Other frequencies from this section of the questionnaire can be found below in Table 2.

Table 2. *Percentage (Number) of Snapchat Usage and Knowledge*

|   | Yes        | No         |
|---|------------|------------|
| Do you know what Snapchat is?   | 97.6% (40) | 2.4% (1)   |
| Do you know how to find the messages on Snapchat?   | 64.1 (25)  | 35.9% (14) |
| Do you know what an emoticon/emoji is?  | 100% (39)  | 0% (0)     |
| Do you know how to add a friend/follower on Snapchat or how to respond to a request?                            | 64.1% (25) | 35.9 (14)  |
| Do you know what a Snapchat score is?   | 36.8% (14) | 63.2% (24) |
| Does your child(ren) use or show interest in using Snapchat?  | 88.2% (30) | 11.8% (4)  |
| If your child comes to you and says, “I have 127 views on Snapchat!” Would you know what they are referring to? | 76.5% (26) | 23.5% (8)  |
| Do you know what happens if you tap on the three dots assembled in a pyramid shape?                             | 29.7% (11) | 70.3% (26) |

## Confidence in Parental Monitoring of Snapchat and Other SNS

When responding to the statement, “I have the resources needed to teach my child about the dangers they face on social media,” 3.1% reported that they were *not at all confident*, 40.6% reported that they were *moderately confident* and 56.3% reported that they were *very confident*. Participants were also asked to rate their confidence in their ability to monitor their child’s Snapchat account and other accounts. Fifty percent of the participants were *not at all confident* in their ability to monitor, 31.3% were *moderately confident* and 18.8% were *very confident*. Another statement from this section was, “I know enough about Snapchat to be able to monitor what my child is doing on the site.” Over half of the participants (56.3%) were *not at all confident*, 28.1% were *moderately confident* and 15.6% were *very confident*. Other frequencies in this section of the questionnaire can be found below in Table 3.

Table 3. *Confidence in Monitoring Usage*

|  | Not at all<br>confident | Moderately<br>confident | Very<br>confident |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| I have the resources needed to teach my child about the dangers they face on social media. | 3.1% (1)                | 40.6% (13)              | 56.3% (18)        |
| Ability to monitor your child’s Snapchat account and other social media accounts.          | 50.0% (16)              | 31.3% (10)              | 18.8% (6)         |
| I have the resources I need to teach my child how to use social media safely.              | 9.4% (3)                | 34.4% (11)              | 56.3% (18)        |
| I know enough about Snapchat to be able to monitor what my child is doing on the site.     | 56.3% (18)              | 28.1% (9)               | 15.6% (5)         |

### **Attitudes/Perceptions and Confidence in Monitoring**

Parent's perception of SNS was defined by a section of the MTUAS scale while the confidence in their social media monitoring skills was measured with the five-point Likert scale question of "How confident are you in your ability to monitor your child's Snapchat account and other social media accounts?" There was not a significant correlation between perception of SNS and confidence to monitor a child's social media account ( $p = .272$ ). There was a positive relationship between these two variables so when perception of SNS was more positive, the confidence of the parent to monitor their child's social media account also increased.

### **Social Media Literacy and Confidence in Monitoring**

Social media literacy was measured by the aggregate of four questions asking if the participants knew how to find messages on Snapchat, knew what an emoticon/emoji was, how to add a friend/follower on Snapchat, and knew about a Snapchat score. The confidence in their social media monitoring skills was measured with the five-point Likert scale question of "How confident are you in your ability to monitor your child's Snapchat account and other social media accounts?" There was not a significant correlation between social media literacy and confidence in social media monitoring skills ( $p = .332$ ). There was a positive relationship between these two variables so when one felt knowledgeable about social media, they were also more likely to feel confident in monitoring their child's use of social media.

## **Formation of Program**

The overall goal in creating the workshop was to increase participants' media literacy of Snapchat in order to enhance instructive parental social media monitoring/mediation. It was rooted in both the research that was discussed in the literature review and the results of this study. For example, the majority of the participants (84.4%) in this study reported that they were *not at all confident* or *moderately confident* in their ability to monitor their child's Snapchat activity considering the current knowledge they possessed. This particular result helped confirm the decision to use Snapchat in the portion of the workshop aimed at increasing participants' media literacy. The responses to the social media literacy questions also helped inform the instructor on the content to focus on when discussing Snapchat navigation. Majority of the parents (97.6%) knew what Snapchat was, but were not familiar with the certain terms and pages that are linked to Snapchat such as a "Snapchat score" (see Table 2). After examining these results, the instructor decided to go through the content available within Snapchat and have the participants follow along for clarity.

Including the information from existing literature and the results of this study, the workshops' sections/parts were guided by a family life education lesson plan (Darling, Cassidy & Powell, 2014; See Appendix C for lesson plan). The resulting objectives were that participants will learn the risks and benefits of Snapchat and other social media sites (media literacy/perceptions of Snapchat), learn the basics of how to navigate and use Snapchat and what Snapchat is (media literacy), and have access to tips for monitoring that were developed in order to facilitate an instructive mediation monitoring relationship

with their child (confidence in monitoring/monitoring skills). The expected outcomes of the workshop were as follows: participants will be more fluent with the Snapchat app (enhanced media literacy), have a more instructive monitoring relationship with their child regarding social media especially Snapchat (increased instructive parental monitoring), have a better awareness of both benefits and dangers of Snapchat and other SNS (enhanced media literacy) and feel confident in their ability to monitor Snapchat and other SNS (increased confidence in parental monitoring and positive perceptions).

The resulting sections of the workshop included risk and benefits of social media use, Snapchat navigation tutorial, social media monitoring tips, “test yourself” section and conclusion. Some sections were strictly informational (risk and benefits of social media and social media monitoring tips) and other sections required the parents to interact and participate in prompted activities. For example, the Snapchat navigation tutorial required the participants to download the Snapchat app so they could follow along and interact with the app while going through the tutorial. The “test yourself” section also required interaction by prompting participants to pause the video and answer the questions about the content from the previous sections. Lastly, participants were asked to write/record their answer to a conclusion question that they would be asked to enter into the post-evaluation survey following their completion of the workshop.

After creating the PowerPoint slides using this outline, the workshop was recorded using Camtasia software. The workshop instructor was recorded with audio and video. Once the program was edited and completed, it was posted to YouTube using a private link that could only be accessed by individuals who possessed the exact link to

the video. The duration of the workshop video was approximately 45 minutes long. If interested, the link can be retrieved by contacting the primary author.

## **Discussion**

There was not a significant relationship between attitudes/perceptions toward SNS and confidence in monitoring or social media literacy. However, positive relationships were found between confidence in monitoring and both variables. So participants that held more positive attitudes toward SNS had a higher level of social media literacy and were more likely to be confident in their monitoring skills.

Another interesting result was that a total of 58.5% of the participants *disagreed* or were indifferent to the statement, “I feel it is important to keep up with the latest social networking sites.” However, the overwhelming majority of the participants reported that they still have children living at home. This may not be seen as an issue now, but it may become more significant in the future. New SNS platforms will likely continue to develop and teenagers will continue to use new social media accounts. Yet, the responses to the above statement show that some parents do not deem it necessary to keep up with these sites. If this attitude or perception does not change in the future, it is likely that their confidence in their ability to monitor will remain low. This is seen in their responses to the statement, “I know enough about Snapchat to be able to monitor what my child is doing on the site.” A total of 84.4% of the participants reported that were *not all confident* or *moderately confident*.

Over 90% of the participants in this study agreed with the attitude statement, “Social media makes people waste too much time.” However, the research reviewed in



this study reported many important benefits that come from the use of social media (O’Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). It is possible that parents have heard more about the negative or dangerous perspective of social media and not much about the beneficial perspective. The workshop created in this program was an attempt to teach both perspectives to parents to see if there were any changes in this particular perception/attitude towards SNS and other attitudes like it.

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study. The overarching limitations were sample size and representation. Because the sample size was relatively small, it would be difficult to generalize the results to the entire population and made it difficult to find any significant results. Furthermore, representation of certain ethnicities, genders, incomes and education levels were either low or not present at all. This all reduced the generalizability of the sample included in this study. It is important to note that the researcher had no intentions of excluding any of these groups from the project.

Another limitation in this study is that it used a correlational—rather than causal—analysis. However, the analysis of these variables in relation to each other has not previously been done and so correlational analysis needed to be conducted to explore the relationships. Furthermore, the data in the upcoming research on the effectiveness of the workshop created in this program will provide an experimental component for this data.

Despite these limitations, the results found in this study were still important especially since there is not much research exploring the relationships between the three

variables in this study. It also provided great insight and information that was taken into consideration when forming the workshop. This research served as a foundation and can provide insight to future research done in this area. It can also give direction on what aspects need to be further analyzed and maybe reconstructed.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The first and obvious suggestion for future research would be to replicate this study with a larger and more diverse/representative sample group. This would determine if there were any differences between people who have different backgrounds and education/income levels. For example, a majority of the participants reported having a middle-class income or higher and most of them had a four-year degree or higher. This could have had an effect on the study yielding no significant results. It is possible that this sample of people have better resources and opportunities that lower income families may not have. Over half of the participants in this study reported having resources to teach their child about the dangers of social media. Unfortunately, this study did not have enough representation to accurately test those differences so future research should definitely take it into consideration.

It would also be suggested to break the attitudes/perceptions measures down into smaller sections and ask about each SNS separately from the other. For example, instead of just one broad statement about social media wasting time, state that: "Snapchat makes people waste too much time," and "Facebook makes people waste too much time." By doing this, one would be able to analyze any differences in attitudes and perceptions toward each SNS.

Questions about media literacy of other SNS could also be asked. Research that follows these suggestions could possibly determine if there is a relationship between the newness and lack of knowledge of a specific social media platform and the participants' attitudes/perceptions towards that platform. Lastly, it is suggested that future research adds a variable assessing parental monitoring behavior. This could give insight into how these variables may influence the type of monitoring participants are engaging in (restrictive or instructive).

### **Future Plans**

The research that will be done in the near future on this topic is the analysis of the workshops created in this study. After participation in the workshop, parents will take a post-evaluation survey that will ask questions from this survey to assess any changes that occurred due to the program. Participants will also be asked questions about their opinions and views of the workshop and the instructor and how they plan to implement what they learned from the workshop.

### **Conclusion**

This research analyzed the relationships between social media literacy, attitudes/perceptions toward SNS and confidence in monitoring abilities. In addition to that, a family life education program focused on Snapchat was created based off of existing research and results from the study. Although the study did not yield significant results, there were some important findings and frequencies that will allow this study to serve as a foundation for future research. Any further work done in this particular area should address the limitations in this study and adjust accordingly. The analysis of the

relationships between these specific variables is relatively novel. Therefore, the results from this study were not enough to rule out or support whether or not a relationship does exist between the variables. More research needs to be done in this area to make that determination and—as long as social media continues to be used by teens—this research will continue to be relevant and important.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Consent Form**

#### **THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT**

You are invited to participate in a research study that is focused on the social media monitoring skills of parents, their perception toward social media and on analyzing the effects of a parent educational workshop that teaches parent how to use Snapchat (social networking site) on their social media monitoring skills.

You have the right to terminate your participation at any time without penalty and you may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your current status or future relations with the University of Southern Mississippi.

The researcher has implemented safeguards to protect your confidentiality by using recommended best practices in accordance to institutional guidelines. Your participation in this research will be completely confidential and data will be averaged and reported in aggregate. Your responses will be maintained on a secure, password protected computer. No identifying information will be recorded in the surveys. If you would like to join our in-person workshop, identifying information will be separated from your survey responses.

Although your participation in this part of the research study may not benefit you personally, it will help us understand parents' knowledge about and perception towards social media sites such as Snapchat. Please be assured that personal information about you will not be revealed, so that you may answer freely about your experiences without fear of negative consequences.

We believe that you will not experience any physical risks than what you might typically encounter when being on the Internet. However, the questionnaire does cover sensitive material and you may experience some personal discomfort. If you desire mental health services, please click the following link to find a therapist near you ([www.therapistlocator.net](http://www.therapistlocator.net)) or call the National Hopeline Network at 1-800-784-2433.

If you have questions about this project, you may contact Dr. Claire Kimberly at [claire.kimberly@usm.edu](mailto:claire.kimberly@usm.edu)

This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should

be directed to the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records, if you so desire.

This is to certify that I agree to participate as a volunteer in a research study as an authorized part of the education and research program of University of Southern Mississippi.

The investigation and my part in the investigation have been clearly explained to me by the informed consent, and I understand this explanation. The procedures of this investigation and a description of any risks and discomforts have been provided to me.

I understand that I am free to deny any answers to specific items or questions in the survey.

I understand that any data or answers to questions will remain confidential with regard to my identity.

I further understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation at any time.

I have read and understand the above consent form, I certify that I am 18 years old or older and, by clicking the "yes" below, I indicate my willingness to voluntarily take part in the study.

Do you wish to continue on to the survey?

Yes

No

## Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter



### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | [www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board](http://www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board)

### NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- ☐ The risks to subjects are minimized.
- ☐ The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- ☐ The selection of subjects is equitable.
- ☐ Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- ☐ Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- ☐ Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- ☐ Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- ☐ Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- ☐ If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.  
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 17101801

PROJECT TITLE: Changes in perception, literacy, and monitoring of Snapchat among parents

PROJECT TYPE: Honor's Thesis Project

RESEARCHER(S): Aerial Holmes

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education and Psychology

DEPARTMENT: Child and Family Studies

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: DCUR/Eagle SPUR Award

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 10/25/2017 to 10/24/2018

**Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.**

**Institutional Review Board**

## **Appendix C: FLE Snapchat Educational Workshop Outline**

### **Snapchat Parent Education Workshop Lesson Plan**

The workshop will be focused on parents' monitoring skills of their child/children social media use with emphasis on the social networking site, Snapchat. During the workshop, which will take about an hour to complete, parents will learn how to navigate Snapchat for better understanding and monitoring skills. The participants in the workshop will preferably have a child who uses or is interested in using Snapchat. The only materials that the parents will need is their cellphone or any other mobile device that they can download and open the Snapchat app on and a device to watch the workshop with. The workshop will consist of an introduction and conclusion with four sections in between. First, the workshop conductor will introduce herself and give a brief description and schedule for the program. Next, parents will learn the benefits and risks of social media use. Then the parents will learn how to navigate the Snapchat app. The goal in that section is not to have the parents become experts when using Snapchat but to teach them enough so that they know what they are dealing with when monitoring their teens' use of this app. After parents have grasped an understanding of Snapchat, the third section will begin. In this section, parents will be given a few tips on monitoring that are aimed at facilitating an instructive monitoring relationship with their child. After this section, participants will have an opportunity to test themselves on the information they learned. The instructor will then conclude the workshop by prompting the participants to record their answer to a conclusion question that they will be asked to enter into a post evaluation survey. For comprehension purposes, the Snapchat navigation workshop will require parents to download the Snapchat app so that they can follow along with the tutorial. In order to assess whether participants are implementing what they learned at the program, participants will take a post-evaluation survey and they will be asked to opt into a two-week follow-up survey at the end of the post-test.

**Vision and Goal for Snapchat Parent Education Workshops:** to increase parents' media literacy regarding snapchat to enhance parental monitoring.

**Workshop objectives:** Participants will:

1. Learn the risks and benefits their children face via Snapchat and other social media
2. Learn the basics of how to navigate Snapchat and its general statistics that are relevant to their teens' lives.
3. Have access to tips that are aimed at facilitating an instructive social media monitoring relationship with their child

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Have a better awareness of the risks and benefits of social media (enhanced social media literacy)
2. Participants will be fluent with the Snapchat social media network (enhanced social media literacy)
3. Have a more instructive monitoring relationship with their child regarding social media especially Snapchat (increased instructive parental monitoring)

4. Feel more confident in their abilities to monitor Snapchat and other social media sites (increased parental monitoring confidence and positive perception)

## **Appendix D: Questionnaire/Survey**

### Demographics:

- 1.) What year were you born?
- 2.) Which best describes your gender?
  - Male
  - Female
  - Other (please describe)
- 3.) How do you define your ethnicity/race?
  - Caucasian
  - African American
  - Hispanic
  - Asian
  - Multicultural
  - Other (please describe)
- 4.) What is the highest level of education you have completed?
  - Less than high school
  - Some college
  - 2-year degree
  - 4-year degree
  - Professional degree
  - Doctorate
- 5.) Which best describes your relationship status?
  - Single
  - Married
  - Divorced
  - Separated
  - Widowed
- 6.) What is your total annual household income?
  - Less than \$10,000
  - \$10,000 - \$49,999
  - \$50,000 - \$99,999
  - \$100,000 or more
- 7.) What is the zip code of where you live?
- 8.) How many children (under the age of 18) do you currently have living at home with you?
  - None
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3

- 4
- 5
- 6 or more

9.) Please respond to each question below (if applicable):

|   | OLDEST<br>CHILD | MIDDLE<br>CHILD | YOUNGEST<br>CHILD |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Gender of child (M=male; F=female)                    |                 |                 |                   |
| Age of child in years                                 |                 |                 |                   |
| Relationship to each child (mother, stepfather, etc.) |                 |                 |                   |

Attitudes/Perception towards Social Media:

Directions: Please respond to each statement below:

Response options were the same for all statements in this section and are listed below:

- Strongly agree (5)
- Agree (4)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)

1. (Positive attitudes) I feel it is important to be able to find any information whenever I want online.
  2. (Positive attitudes) I feel it is important to be able to access social media any time I want.
  3. (Positive attitudes) I think it is important to keep up with the latest social networking sites.
  4. (Positive attitudes) Social media will provide solutions to many of our problems.
  5. (Positive attitudes) With social media anything is possible.
  6. (Positive attitudes) I feel that I get more accomplished because of social media.
  7. (Negative attitudes) Social media makes people waste too much time.
  8. (Negative attitudes) Social media makes life more complicated.
  9. (Negative attitudes) Social media makes people more isolated.
-

### Snapchat Mechanisms:

Directions: Please respond to each question below:

Response options were the same for all questions in this section and are listed below:

- Yes
- No

- 1.) Do you know what Snapchat is? (If so, explain.)
  - 2.) Does your teenage child use or show interest in using Snapchat?
  - 3.) How familiar are you with Snapchat?
  - 4.) Do you know how to find the messages on Snapchat?
  - 5.) Do you know what an emoticon/emoji is?
  - 6.) Do you know how to add a friend/follower on Snapchat or how to respond to a request?
  - 7.) If your teenager comes to you and says, "I have 127 views on my Snapchat," would you know what they are referring too?
  - 8.) When you open the Snapchat application on a mobile phone, a camera appears. In the bottom, right corner there are three dots assembled in a pyramid shape. Do you know what happens if you press that button?
  - 9.) Do you know what a Snapchat score is?
- 

### Confidence in Snapchat/Social Media Monitoring and Awareness of Dangers:

- 1.) How confident are you in your ability to monitor your child's Snapchat account and other social media accounts?
  - Very confident
  - Moderately confident
  - Not at all confident
- 2.) How important is it that you monitor your child's social media accounts?
  - Very confident
  - Moderately confident
  - Not at all confident
- 3.) In your opinion, how dangerous is Snapchat?
  - Very dangerous
  - Moderately dangerous
  - Not at all dangerous
- 4.) In your opinion, how dangerous is Facebook?
  - Very dangerous
  - Moderately dangerous
  - Not at all dangerous



- 5.) What dangers do you think your child faces while using Snapchat and other social networking sites? (You may select more than one)
- Contact with strangers
  - Cyberbullying
  - Exposure to sexually explicit material
  - Exposure to violence
- 6.) Which social media do you or would you feel most confident in monitoring?
- Facebook
  - Snapchat
  - Instagram
  - Twitter
  - None of the above

How confident are you in the following areas?

- 7.) I have the resources needed to teach my child about the dangers they face on social media
- Very confident
  - Moderately confident
  - Not at all confident
- 8.) I have the resources I need to teach my child how to use social media safely
- Very confident
  - Moderately confident
  - Not at all confident
- 9.) I know enough about Snapchat to be able to monitor what my child is doing on the site.
- Very confident
  - Moderately confident
  - Not at all confident
- 

Identification Number\*\*\*

1.) We will be forming a random number to connect you to additional surveys given during the program. This will help maintain your anonymity when data is analyzed after the program is concluded.

2.) What are the last two digits of your cell phone number? Put a "0" if it does not apply.

3.) What is the first letter of your mother's first name? Put a "X" if you do not know.

4.) What are the first two numbers of your street address? Put a "0" if it does not apply.

---

Workshop Opt-In Option:

1.) Would you like to participate in a parent education workshop where you will learn more about Snapchat that could help improve your parental monitoring skills? This workshop will be conducted online for your convenience and all you will need is a cell phone or other mobile device. If you are interested, click yes and more information will be sent to you.

-Yes

-No